

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the Animate Conception of Nature in the Late Middle Ages

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Abstract : The Beheading Game story makes up the main frame of the plot of the Middle English alliterative romance, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.¹⁾ The story is Celtic in origin, and its earliest written form is found in the Middle Irish narrative, *Fled Bricrend*, and is utilized in several medieval romances composed more than a century and a half earlier than this romance. This romance is unique in that, in addition to the way the Beheading Game story is handled, the Green Knight, the challenger, is characterized by the color green and suggests his association with vegetation. He may be said to be a chivalric version of the so-called Green Man, an embodiment of the vital life force which medieval people may have felt in face of seasonal recurrences of nature and at contemporary religious or seasonal folk festivals. This argument is supported by materials related to the fields of social anthropology, mythology and folklore, and also the visual arts of medieval church architecture. The poet seems to have utilized such an animate conception of nature as is embodied in "the Green Man" to make the figure of the Green Knight fit in with his own conception of the poetic world of this romance.

1. Introduction

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (SGGK) (? c.1390) is acknowledged as a masterpiece of Middle English romances. But the meaning of this romance is controversial. The difference of opinions mainly arises from how to interpret the significance of the Green Knight, who plays the pivotal role in the development of the actions of the story.

The outline of the story runs as follows: On New Year's Day the Green Knight rides on horseback, carrying a huge axe in one hand and a spray of holly in the other, into

the feasting hall of King Arthur's court at Camelot, and makes a challenge of the Beheading Game. He demands any knight that dare should cut off his head on condition of receiving the return blow one year later at the Green Chapel. Sir Gawain accepts the challenge and beheads him. The Green Knight picks up his head and goes away, leaving the axe there, after telling Sir Gawain to fulfill his pledge at the Green Chapel. After All Saints' Day Sir Gawain starts on his journey to seek the Green Chapel and the Green Knight. On Christmas Eve, after experiencing many hardships, he finds a fair

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castle in a forest and is welcome to stay there. The lord of the castle urges him to stay until the morning of New Year's Day, by telling him that the Green Chapel is near. Then, for three days prior to New Year's Day, Gawain goes through trials of the "Temptation," which is combined with the "Exchange of Winnings," without noticing he is being tested. On the last day, Gawain accepts from the lady of the castle a green girdle that is said to preserve his life against a fatal blow, but does not offer it to the lord in accordance with the promise to exchange winnings each evening, because he has been entreated by the lady to keep it secret from her husband. On New Year's Day, at the return match of the Beheading Game, the Green Knight, after two feigned blows, draws down the axe, just grazing Gawain's neck. The Green Knight explains that the graze was given because of his lack of fidelity concerning the green girdle, but now he has atoned for it. Gawain admits his fault, and declining the Green Knight's invitation to revisit the castle, goes back to King Arthur's court.

Obviously, the Beheading Game makes up the main frame of the plot of this romance. The story is Celtic in origin, and is found in an existent Middle Irish heroic narrative, *Fled Bricrend*. The story is later utilized in various ways in medieval romances, French and German, which precede *SGGK*. By comparing features of the original story and these romances with those of this romance, we find the uniqueness in this poet's way of handling the story and also in the figure of the challenger, the Green Knight. His feature characterized by the color green is primarily symbolic of vegetation. When we examine the Green Knight's characteristics in the context of cultural traditions of folk customs and tales,

and also in connection with the visual arts of medieval church architecture, the Green Knight may be said to be a chivalric version of the so-called Green Man.

This essay is an attempt to argue for the significance of the Green Knight as a chivalric version of the Green Man in a new perspective gained by reconsidering old and recent scholarship about the Green Man.

2. The Source story

The rough outline of the Beheading Game story in *SGGK* resembles the story found in a Middle Irish prose narrative called *Fled Bricrend* (*The Feast of Bricriu*). This is one of tales about boisterous, mighty and heroic deeds around and of a hero, Cuchulainn, nephew of Conchobar, the powerful king of ancient Ulster, and is part of the sagas of the Ulster Cycle, the stories about heroic deeds comparable to those of Homeric heroes.²⁾ This tale is preserved in the manuscript known as *Leabhar Na H-Uidhri* (*The Book of Dun[Cow]*)—the earliest extant manuscript containing this narrative, that dates from about 1100, though the tale itself is thought to date back to the 8th century or earlier.³⁾ The narrative contains two versions of the story: the shorter version called by Kittredge "The Uath Version," and the longer one titled "The Champion's Covenant." The text of the former is found complete in the above-mentioned MS while the text of the latter in the same MS is incomplete, as the text breaks off in the middle of a sentence describing the challenger's talk about his challenge. In the Henderson's edition, therefore, the continuation of the latter, i.e., the missing part that is about three fifths of the story, was borrowed from the text found in the Edinburgh Gaelic MS XL which has the story in its entirety and, according to Henderson, "seems to belong to

the 16th century," and from the texts of other MSS.⁴⁾

The two versions of the story⁵⁾ are separate episodes in the narrative and naturally there are differences between them. Since "The Uath's Version" is shorter and simpler, it is considered "a more primitive form" of the story.⁶⁾ The outline of "The Uath version" is as follows. Three heroes of Ulster, Loigaire, Conall and Cuchulainn, visit Uath (Terror) who is a shapeshifter and does magic tricks, at his loch, led by a guide provided by Budi (Yellow), in order to ask Uath to decide who deserves the champion's portion, that is, who is the greatest hero. Uath proposes the beheading game as the covenant for the judgement, saying that he is to be beheaded first with an axe he has with him, and will then deal them the return blow. Only Cuchulainn agrees to make the covenant and fulfills it while the other two refuse it. And the game takes place there, i.e., outdoors by the Uath's loch. Handing the axe to Cuchulainn, Uath lays his head on the stone. After Cuchulainn has beheaded him, Uath goes off into the loch holding his axe and head on his bosom. On the next day Uath returns and, dealing the return blow, he lets the axe come down three times with its blunt side downward on the neck of Cuchulainn, and judges Cuchulainn to deserve the champion's portion though the other two dispute this judgement.

In "The Champion's Covenant," one evening a huge, horrible looking churl comes into the court of the King of Ulster, having a block in his left hand and a big axe in his right. His head is bushy like a tree branch, and his yellow eyes are large and fierce. He demands those present, except for the King, to play the beheading game with him, saying that the Ulstermen have excelled in warrior's

virtues such as strength, valor, truth, generosity, etc. So the game takes place at the court in the presence of all the noble warriors. His first proposal is that he decapitates one of the heroes there and then receives the return blow the next day. But urged to reverse the order, he agrees to it. One warrior, Munremar, volunteers to accept the challenge, and beheads the churl, who, when decapitated, rises up and goes away holding his head, the axe and the block on his bosom — an event which horrifies all the men present. He returns the following night, but Munremar avoids him and doesn't fulfill the pledge of receiving the return blow. Two more warriors, Loigaire and Conall, each undertakes beheading him each day successively, but fails to fulfill the pledge. It is only Cuchulainn who fulfills his pledge, without avoiding a return match. However, just before the return match he is caught with dejection. But dissuaded by the king, he rather resumes himself, and then stretches himself on the block and even has sharp words with the challenger. While all are gazing, the challenger lets down the axe but with its blunt side downward, and then gives the verdict that Cuchulainn deserves the championship because he is found to possess the greatest valor, bravery and truthfulness. Besides, the narrator reveals that the challenger is Curoi in disguise. The result is fulfillment of the promise given earlier to Cuchulainn by Curoi. Incidentally, Curoi is described as "a semi-supernatural being," according to the comments by Cross and Slover.⁷⁾

Although Kittredge takes the longer version as the source story, it is now an acknowledged fact that a story like the one represented in these two versions is the source for *SGGK*.⁸⁾ The challenger, just like

the Green Knight, has magical power of changing his appearances and is a huge being and asks the heroes to behead him with a big axe of his own. When he has had his head cut off, he picks it up and goes away like the Green Knight, though he takes back the axe with him. In dealing the return blow, the challenger, when he finds Cuchulainn faithful to his word, judges him to be the greatest of warriors of Ireland. Just like the Green Knight, the challenger is here the tester and judge. These are points found in common in both versions. However, the shorter version has affinity with *SGGK* in the challenger's proposal of the game and in the way of the return match. The challenger proposes from the beginning that he be beheaded first and the other party receive the return blow later, and at the return match he lets down the axe three times without cutting off Cuchulainn's head. One distinctively different point from *SGGK* is that the return match is held on the next day in both versions, not one year later, and at the same place.

In addition to these points directly connected to the theme of the Beheading Game, some parts of either version serve to bring our mind back to some scenes in *SGGK* though similarities in the peripheral matters might have been fortuitous. The intrusion of the huge challenger into the royal court of Ulster in the longer version recalls the scene of the Green Knight's intrusion into King Arthur's court, while the return match held outdoors in the shorter version recalls the return match at the Green Chapel. Cuchulainn being in dejection and receiving words of dissuasion in the longer version reminds us of Gawain's psychological condition on his last day at Bertilak's castle and of the guide's word to him on his way to the Green Chapel. Even the exchanges of

extravagant, boasting or threatening and inciting remarks between the challenger and the Ulstermen or Cuchulainn let us recall scenes at Arthur's court or at the Green Chapel in *SGGK*.

3. Analogues in medieval romances

The similar Beheading Game story has been found in several medieval romances, all Arthurian, since Gaston Paris first listed them.⁹⁾ Five of them precede *SGGK*.¹⁰⁾ Of these, four are in Old French: The story of Caradoc included in the first continuation of Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval* (c.1190-1200), *Perlesvaus* (c.1210), *La Mule sanz Frain* by Païen de Mezières (the early 13th century), and *Hunbaut* (the first half of the 13th century); and one is in Middle High German: *Diu Krône* by Heinrich von dem Türlin (c.1220).¹¹⁾

It will be convenient for our discussion of *SGGK* to look at the main features of the Beheading Game story in these earlier romances. In the first two, i.e., in the story of Caradoc¹²⁾ and *Perlesvaus*, the hero who accepts the challenge is not Gawain, but Caradoc and Lancelot respectively. The story of Caradoc is a sort of self-contained biographical romance about the knight named Caradoc, son of King Arthur's sister. On the day of Pentecost when King Arthur is celebrating the festival soon after Caradoc has been dubbed a knight, a knight on a grey horse comes into the court to propose a Beheading Game. As no other knight dares to accept the challenge, Caradoc ventures. The challenger is an enchanter, named Eliavres, and so survives decapitation by Caradoc, with his head being rejoined to the body at once. The instrument used is not an axe but a sword carried by Eliavres. The return blow is to be given at Arthur's court

one year later. After one year Eliavres comes in, and when giving the return blow, he strikes Caradoc just with the flat of the sword, and acknowledges him as being valiant and trustworthy. Then he tells Caradoc in private that he is his real father. This incident is a factor to make the Beheading Game an organic part of the plot of Caradoc's adventures hereafter.

Perlesvaus, one of the earliest Old French prose romances, consists of eleven Branches. The first part of the Beheading Game occurs at the end of Branch IV as an episodic incident falling upon Lancelot when he visits Waste City during his adventure in search of the Grail Castle. At a palace in Waste City, a knight in a red tunic with a huge axe in his hands requests Lancelot to behead him with the axe and then to be beheaded in return one year later. Lancelot, promising to come back for the return blow, cuts off his head and leaves the scene. The description about the return blow is given in Branch IX. Lancelot returns to Waste City after his visit to Grail Castle and other adventures more than one year later. When Lancelot returns to the palace, he finds the brother of the knight he decapitated, claiming the right to the return blow. He is told that the decapitated knight fell dead on the spot. Now, Lancelot ducks his head as the first blow is coming down upon him. So the knight raises his axe for the second time, when two beautiful ladies intervene, and throws away the axe, acknowledging Lancelot as the truest knight in the world — a virtue of loyalty which saves Waste City from ruin.¹³⁾

In the last three romances, the hero is Gawain. *La Mule sanz Frain* is a märchen-like story of about 1,100 verses. On the day of Pentecost, a maiden riding a mule with no bridle comes to King Arthur's court to appeal

for a knight who will win back the bridle for her. As Kay's attempt fails, Gawain undertakes the task. The Beheading Game is an incident of the ordeal Gawain must go through on his mission, and takes place at the strange revolving castle where the bridle is being kept by a lady who later turns out to be the sister of the one that has come to Arthur's court. At the entrance of the underground cellar, Gawain is confronted by a big, hairy churl like a Moor, who, after serving him a good meal, challenges him to behead him and then to receive the return blow in the next morning. The instrument is an axe, and a block is also used for the head to be placed upon. When Gawain decapitates the churl, he picks up the head and returns to the cellar. On the next morning, however, the churl doesn't strike Gawain though he raises the axe, and judges him to be loyal. The churl who is in service to the lady of the castle, hereafter helps Gawain in various ways to attain his goal. When Gawain returns to Arthur's court and the bridle is offered to the maiden, she takes her leave of the court.¹⁴⁾

Diu Krône is a long romance consisting of about 30,000 verses in which mostly Gawain's adventures including the search for the Grail are related, and the principal material of which is taken from French sources. A story whose outline is quite like *La Mule* is found a little before of the middle part of the whole romance. So, here also the Beheading Game takes place as an incident of Gawain's episodic adventure for the maiden who has come to Arthur's court for help. But this story is considered to be more rationalized than *La Mule*, with roles of characters and various parts of the story functioning in a tight relationship, and has additional elements different from the French romance.¹⁵⁾ The bridle has been usurped by

the elder sister of the maiden who visited Arthur's court despite their father's will to leave it with them both. The challenger who confronts Gawain at the revolving castle is a magician and so a shapeshifter, and is the uncle of the two maidens. He offers choices to Gawain as to who is to be decapitated first, i.e., he first, or Gawain first. Gawain cuts off his head first. The instrument is an axe, but no block is used. When decapitated, the magician seeks after and takes up his head and leaves. On the next morning when the magician is to give Gawain the return blow, he only gives two feints. Just as in *La Mule*, the Beheading Game is used here as a means to test the hero's courage and worth. Gawain, having overcome many obstacles, takes back the bridle and the elder sister to Arthur's court where he gets married to her and the younger sister to another knight.

Hunbaut is a romance in which Hunbaut, a tactful knight, accompanies Gawain in carrying out the mission ordered by King Arthur to subdue the King of the Isles.¹⁶⁾ During this mission Gawain has various adventures. The existent version of the romance does not preserve the whole story because it breaks off in the middle of one of Gawain's adventures after he has overcome the King of the Isles. The Beheading Game story is found long before the break. It is an incident Gawain encounters in front of the gate to the castle of the King of the Isles. There Hunbaut and Gawain find a tall, black, ugly churl with an axe in his hands blocking their way and challenging Gawain to the exchange of blows. Having heard Hunbaut's advice, Gawain makes the decision by himself to give the blow first and to receive the return blow immediately afterward. Handing the axe to Gawain, the churl extends his neck before him. Gawain cuts it

off, the head flying more than ten paces away. At that moment the churl intends to run after it, but, being prevented by Gawain, falls dead, with his enchantment coming to an end because the head has failed to rejoin his body. So no return blow takes place. Unlike the challenger in *La Mule* and *Diu Crône*, the challenger in this story is entirely hostile to Gawain and functions as an obstacle to Gawain's mission.

The theme of the Beheading Game ultimately derives from literature of Celtic origin like the story found in *Fled Bricrend* as we have seen above. However, this theme appears with many variations when it is exploited in those medieval romances which were composed in succession over the period of half a century since the end of the 12th century. The hero who accepts the challenge is a noble, valiant knight. But the challenger is either a knight (as in the Caradoc story and *Perlesvaus*) or a big, terrifying man (as in *La Mule*, *Diu Crône* and *Hunbaut*), having magical or supernatural powers (like Eliavres in the Caradoc story, the magician in *Diu Crône*, the churl in *La Mule*, and *Hunbaut* though this last one has been disenchanted by the hero), or without having any such power (like the knight in *Perlesvaus*). The instrument used is a sword (the Caradoc story), or an axe with a block (*La Mule*), or just an axe only (*Perlesvaus*, *Diu Crône* and *Hunbaut*). The place of the Game is the same for both the first stroke and the return blow in all these romances. It is held at King Arthur's court in the presence of the nobility (the Caradoc story), or at the palace in Waste City (*Perlesvaus*), at the entrance to the underground cellar of a castle (*La Mule*), in a fine bed room (*Diu Crône*), or at the gate of a castle (*Hunbaut*), never outdoors in the wilderness. The intervals between the first

stroke and the return match are various. In the Caradoc story and *Perlesvaus*, it is one year. In *La Mule sanz Frein* and *Diu Crône*, the return match is held on the following day, and in *Hunbaut*, the return blow is to follow immediately after the first stroke by the challenger. What is more, the context in which the Beheading Game occurs is quite different with each romance. Except for the Caradoc story in which it fits in well with the plot of the hero's biographical story, it occurs more or less as an incidental episode in other romances though it serves to add to knightly virtues of valour and trustworthiness of the knight involved to further qualify him for whatever mission is assigned to him.

It follows that each poet is manipulating the theme of the Beheading Game in the manner that seems to him suitable to effect his purpose of telling the narrative. Of course there may have been borrowings, conscious or unconscious, from the existent works both in written and unwritten traditions,¹⁷⁾ and also influences of other factors such as social and cultural conditions. Yet it is obviously up to the poet to decide how to handle the various types of materials at hand in accordance with his own conception of the work and his skills to achieve it.

4. The Green Knight's association with the Green Man

Turning to *SGGK*, we find peculiarities in the way the theme of the Beheading Game is manipulated in this romance. It might be true that the author was well acquainted with and so was influenced by the Caradoc Story as Larry Benson has pointed out. But the features of this romance are different from any of those romances we have seen above. One of the distinctive features is that the

Beheading Game makes up the main frame of the plot of this romance. It concerns the adventure of the hero, Sir Gawain. His adventure begins when he offers to accept the challenge by the Green Knight at King Arthur's court on New Year's Day, and ends when he returns with safety to Arthur's court after having fulfilled his promise at the Green Chapel. As to the interval of one year between the first and return blows, this romance is similar to the Caradoc story and *Perlesvaus*. But this romance is different from any of the above-mentioned romances in that the first and the return matches are held at different places. Besides, the nature of the return match is conditioned by how Gawain goes through trials of the Temptation which is intricately combined with the theme of the Beheading Game, with the Green Knight playing an important role in the whole course of the hero's adventure.

One more distinctive feature is that the Green Knight's whole appearance, including his hair, face and long bushy beard, clothing, and also his horse are particularly characterized by the color "green," and he carries, not a block, but a spray of holly in one hand. According to *Middle English Dictionary*, the color green, when applied to the complexion or the skin, means "pale, colourless, or livid," but the color of this knight is said to be "enker-grene (bright green) (l.150)," and also "As growe grene as þe gres and grener hit semed (to grow green as the grass and, greener, it seemed) (l.235)," primarily suggesting the color of vegetation. *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery* (Ad de Vries, 1976) also gives as the primary sense of the color green "earthly, tangibly growing things, vegetation." Any challenger in the source and analogous stories doesn't have such singularity, except for the description of

the challenger in the longer version of *Fled Bricrend* which implies an association with vegetation: "over him a great spreading club-tree (branch) the size of a winter shed, under which thirty bullocks could find shelter,"¹⁸⁾ though the word "green" is not actually mentioned.

The Beheading Game making up the main frame of the plot and the singularity of the Green Knight's whole appearance, especially with the reference to the color symbolic of vegetation, lead us to identify him as a chivalric version of the so-called "Green Man," that is also called "the Jack-in-the-Green" or "the Wild Man." The association of the Green Knight with the Green Man was first indicated by E. K. Chambers in his book, *The Medieval Stage* (1903).

It is interesting to note that the green man of the peasantry, who dies and lives again, reappears as the Green Knight in one of the most famous divisions of Arthurian romance.¹⁹⁾

He (= the Green Knight) challenged any man of the Round Table to deal him a buffet with the axe on condition of receiving one in return after the lapse of a year. Sir Gawain accepts. The stranger's head is cut off, but he picks it up and rides away with it. This is a close parallel to the resurrection of the slain 'wild man.'

(note for the above statement, *ibid.* p.186)

John Speirs who has given a detailed interpretation of this romance from a similar point of view writes as follows:

The Green Knight whose head is chopped off at his own request and who is yet as miraculously or magically alive as ever, bears an unmistakable

relation to the Green Man of the village festivals of England and Europe. He is in fact no other than a recrudescence in poetry of the Green Man. *Scrutiny* (1949)²⁰⁾

What is the Green Man then? This takes us first into the scenes of village festivals, and then into the field of folklore, together with mythological and anthropological studies that flourished from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century. To look at some more explanations given by E. K. Chambers,²¹⁾ it is said that at the root of village festivals in which the leaf-clad figure, the green man, appears, lies the fact of seasonal recurrence. The Green Man, also called "the Jack-in-the-Green" or "the Wild Man" does not represent the fertilization spirit itself, but one of the worshipers who desires to put himself under the god's protection. Cutting his head off, i.e., killing him, symbolizes the annual death and resurrection of the summer which the leaf-clad figure represents. Versions of the drama of this mock death are witnessed widely in Europe. Some of them preserve the original significance of the ancient cult. But there are others that have assumed new meanings under the influence of Christian custom like those found in England: the 'Jack o' Lent' effigy, the Lincoln 'funeral Alleluia,' the Tenby 'making Christ's bed,' the Monkin 'risin' and buryin' Peter'. In this connection Chambers' following comment on the May-Game and Robin Hood is also interesting. He notes that Robin Hood who is traditionally clad in green may be "a form of the 'wild man' or 'wood-woz' of certain spring dramatic ceremonies," if he could be regarded as a mythological figure at all. About this mythological figure, he also writes, one theory has it that its name "faintly

disguises either Woden in the aspect of a vegetation deity, or a minor wood-spirit Hode, who also survives in the Hodeken of German legend."²²⁾ Robin Hood seems to have been known in the late 14th century as his name appears in connection with ballads in *Piers the Plowman* by William Langland (c.1332-c.1400) (B-text (c.1378), passus v. 402), a work contemporary with *SGGK*. In the passage on the Seven Deadly Sins, Accidia (Sloth) talks in confession:

But I can rymes of Robyn Hood · and
Randolf erle of Chestre, (I know
ballads of Robin Hood and Randolf,
Earl of Chestre)²³⁾

Sir Sidney Lee also gives such an interpretation under the entry for "Robin Hood" in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. But the record evidence found until now about the May-Game in which Robin Hood appears is said not to date back earlier than the mid-15th century.²⁴⁾

Earlier Sir James George Frazer gives explanations about the Jack-in-the-Green in his great, influential book, *The Golden Bough*, (1st ed. 1890; 2nd ed. 1900), which E. K. Chambers used as reference in the above-mentioned book. According to Frazer, the Jack-in-the-Green is an example of relics of tree worship which had been widely observed in Eastern and Western Europe. This tree worship is based on primitive people's way of thinking that trees and plants as well as animals have souls like their own, and that the tree-spirit is regarded as having beneficent powers like fertilizing and procreating. Relics of the tree worship include such folk customs as May-trees, May-bushes, May-poles, May garlands, May-King and -Queen, Leaf King, Grass King, a story of a tree-elf, etc. He gives the best example of the Jack-in-the-Green as the

leaf-clad mummers, quoting from W. Mannhardt (*Baumkultus*, 1875): "a chimney-sweeper who walks encased in a pyramidal framework of wickerwork, which is covered with holly and ivy, and surmounted by a crown of flowers and ribbons," and further quotes from W. H. D. Rouse who gives detailed description of the ceremony held on May 2 as late as in 1892 at Cheltenham:

Jack-in-the-Green or the Bush-carrier was enclosed in a wooden framework on which leaves were fastened so as to make a thick cone about six feet high, . . . The leafy envelope was unbroken except for a single opening through which peered the face of the mummer.²⁵⁾

Frazer considers that generally the tree-spirit or the spirit of vegetation is represented either in vegetable form alone, as by a tree, bough, or flower, or in vegetable and human forms simultaneously, like a tree, bough, or flower in combination with a puppet or a living person, and that when vegetable representation has been dropped, the representation by a living person alone remains, in which case he is marked by being dressed in leaves and flowers. He gives an interesting case in Bohemia that on the fourth Sunday in Lent, while a puppet called Death is thrown in the water by the young people, a young tree cut down by girls in the wood and fastened to a puppet is being carried around by them, singing "We carry Death out of the village, / We bring Summer into the village." In this case, the "Summer" is considered to represent the spirit of vegetation returning in spring, and the tree and the puppet are held to be equivalent.²⁶⁾

In the meantime, Arthur B. Cook, thinking in line with Sir James Frazer, but on the basis of classical archaeology, argues that

we could find the counterparts of the ancient Greek and Roman mythology in the Celtic mythology, and so Irish Nuada or Welsh Nudd is the equivalent of Greek Zeus or Roman Jupiter, who is the sky-god, i.e., the sun as well as the river-god or even the sea-god. And just like the case of Zeus and Jupiter, Irish or Welsh kings may have been treated as the embodiment of Nuada or Nudd, and regarded as being responsible for the fertility of animal and vegetable nature as the human representatives of the god who has control over fish, cattle and the crops. And just as the Greek or Roman sky-god was associated with the tree like the oak, so the Celtic sky-god was related to a sacred tree.²⁷⁾ Cook further says that the "big uncouth staff-bearer" in the source story found in *Fled Bricrend* (here, Cook interprets the great spreading club-tree as what the churl carries in his hand, not as a description of his head) who attacks Cuchulainn is Curoi, son of Daire, meaning son of "Oak" (Irish *dair*), and Cuchulainn who defends himself with a sword resembles the would-be king at Nemi, the sword-bearing successor of Virbius, the first king of Wood, as Sir James Frazer wrote about in the beginning of *The Golden Bough*. This attack, Cook continues, is held as "the crowning test of fitness for the kingship" of Ireland's warriors, and therefore Cuchulainn partakes of a solar hero. And Gawain, as he is the British equivalent of Cuchulainn, has similarity to Cuchulainn. Moreover, Virbius could mean the Green Man. If we connect *Virbius* with *verbena* (a sacred branch), *verber* (a switch) being referable to the root of *viridis* (green), as *Virbius* is sometimes written *Verbius*, *Virbius* could mean "He of the sacred branch." Hence the name of the Green Knight.²⁸⁾

On the other hand, we also find interesting

things in the field of visual arts in the Middle Ages. Among sculptural figures and even in stained glass of the church architecture in the Gothic period, we find strange figures usually called "foliate head," i.e., the face or head with leafy stems growing out of the mouths, or other parts of the human face like the ears, eyes, nostrils, or foreheads. They are found on roof bosses, in carvings of the choir, on misericords, or among leafy carvings on the capitals or walls, or even at outer parts of church buildings. This is not limited to England, but also found on the Continent, that is, in France and Germany.²⁹⁾ In the early 20th century, figures of this kind came to be considered in association with the Jack-in-the Green, and named by Lady Raglan as the "Green Man."³⁰⁾

5. The animate conception of nature

The recent study done by Kathleen Basford about the Green Man figure³¹⁾ reveals insufficiency in the ideas of Lady Raglan and those earlier anthropological folklorists, by showing the Green Man as an art form had not originated in, nor its motifs as it is placed in the medieval church architecture were associated with, such pagan customs of tree worship or rites of fertilization as were interpreted by them. But after the chance introduction from antiquity, it assumed Christian ethical connotations, its images mostly having demonic, evil or sinister effects in the light of biblical symbolism, for example, as Ezekiel 8.17 says: "See, how they hold the branch to the nose," alluding to the idolaters to whom God would show no mercy, or as Rabanus Maurus (776 or 784-856) interpreted the leaves as representing "the sins of the flesh". Over the past half a century, not only the earlier opinions of the Green Man figure but

also the earlier anthropological and mythological views and ideas propounded by Frazer and folklorists have been partly criticized.³²⁾ It is true that these earlier scholars seem to be too obsessed with the ideas of paganism and with their somewhat occult implications. However, materials concerning folk tales and customs collected by them are still valuable today.

The "tree worship" as was advanced by Frazer, apart from his peculiar opinions of pagan rituals, is universally observable. Not only in Europe but also in Asia from ancient times down even until today in some cases, it has been witnessed: for example, in Japan as was already referred to by Yoshiko Uéno in her book, *The Robin Hood Legend* (1988), or in China as was reported in a letter with an attached photo of the tree inserted in *Folk-lore*, 17 (1906). Y. Uéno writes by quoting Yanagida, Kunio, (*Japanese "Matsuri"*, 1942) that the customs of using trees, wooden pillars, boughs, branches, or some specific plants for Shinto rituals and ceremonies, or seasonal festivals might be considered a sort of the "tree worship," or remnants of it, some trees being held sacred for divine spirits and gods, and part of these customs, cherry blossom viewing, or picnicking under the cherry blossoms, for example, seems to have characteristics in common with May Day festivities in Europe.³³⁾ Whether original religious significance is present or not, these customs are still being followed in Japan. Concerning China, the letter in *Folk-lore* tells that "there are legends of a tree of life and a world-tree, the pine, cypress, and other trees, yield elixirs of life, and various trees are said to raise or drive away spirits."³⁴⁾ The connection of the tree worship with, or its impacts on festivities of vegetation is therefore quite probable.

In regard to the tree worship among Germanic peoples, Thomas Wright gives a famous episode about St Boniface (c.680-c.754). The Saint dared cut down in the presence of many pagans "an oak of wonderful magnitude" venerated by them at Geismar with the name signifying the "oak of Jupiter (Thor's Oak?)" to show the superiority of Christianity and to convert them. Wright says that from early writers we learn how trees were "universally the objects of superstitious reverence" in the earlier ages of the pagan Europe.³⁵⁾ Meanwhile, concerning the the Celts, Arthur Cook gives a folk-tale in Wales indicating the "sympathetic relationship between man and tree": A big man called the Strong Man of the Wood receives deathhurt by felling a large oak, but when the seedling comes out of the acorn his wife planted, a son is born of her, who becomes a man with terrible strength when he has grown breast-fed by mother to be strong enough to uproot the tree. He also tells a legendary story of a similar import in Scotland about the Hay family who claimed kinship with the Stuarts. It tells how the fortune of the Hays, since their ancestor was given by King Kenneth the land of Errol in 980 for his meritorious deeds during the Danish invasion, was combined with a vast mistletoe-bearing oak of unknown age, — for example, the duration of the family being united with the tree's existence, a sprig of mistletoe that is cut by a Hay after his surrounding the tree three times sun-ways, being considered a secure guard in battle or a charm against witchery, etc. These effects are, according to Arthur Cook, due to the sun-god's strength that fills the mistletoe bearer. Or, a superstitious story in Cornwall that when the oak in the parish of Probus appeared all of one color, it betokened the

owner's death. Such a story was still being told when Charles I visited Cornwall. On the other hand, about a very old sacred oak in Mugna, Ireland, that gave an abundance of acorns, nuts and apples every year, it is said that in Christian times it seems to have been considered in connection with Christ.³⁶⁾

Basford herself admits about the Green Man, that these figures do not all have the same meanings, but some of foliate heads "might allude to the May King or to the idea of the revival of nature in springtime" — like the one that looks like a May King at the Chapter House of Southwell Minster (late 13th century) (Fig.1), the one representing the Rogationtide processions, at Weston Longville, Norfolk, (14th century), or the one at Sutton Benger, Wiltshire, (early 14th century) (Fig.2). But these figures could be ambivalent, looking beautiful yet having sinister tone as well, or evoking "the horrors of the *silva daemonium* (woodland demon)." She also writes that since the late 13th century, "naturalistic carvings of native wild plants appear in English churches,"³⁷⁾ which might be taken to suggest medieval people's close observation of, and their keen interest in, nature, as well as enough development of skills to portray them.

Talking about the May King or the celebration of the revival of nature, the earliest written references to the custom of the May festivities in England are said to begin around 1240.³⁸⁾ In course of time, English literature in its flowering period, that is, in the late 14th century, contains many references to it, headed by Chaucer (c.1343-1400). We find in *Confessio Amantis* (c.1393) by John Gower (c.1325-1408), a contemporary of Chaucer and of the *Gawain*-poet, a story about a king of Hungary, which touches on May festivities

and ambivalence in life. During May outing with his young nobility, he happens to meet old pilgrims, looking pale like snow-covered bare trees, and reveres them. When his brother has rebuked the king for his veneration of the pilgrims, he gives his brother a lesson, by giving the terror of death and exhorting him to fear God, saying that death comes equally to any man or animal.³⁹⁾ In the calendar page of May of *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, though this is about France, we find a delightful picture of young aristocrats, men and women, who go out and bring back branches with which to decorate their heads. Although this book of hours was made at the beginning of the 15th century, Duc de Berry (1340-1416) is said to have liked to participate in this festivity in his youth, thus suggesting the long standing of this custom.⁴⁰⁾ From these examples, we may say that these practices, even if they might have originated in pre-Christian folk customs, were not always incompatible with Christian faith in those days, though we find written denouncement by churchmen.

Medieval people, who lived mostly on agricultural basis, must have lived and felt much closer to nature than we do today. Their life cycle must have been closely involved in annual seasonal cycles of nature. So it is very natural that they should be sensitive to seasonal changes and even feel close sympathy with nature, living their life in accord with seasonal festivities, which often correspond to feast days of the ecclesiastical calendar. One such example is the Rogations Days, to which one above-mentioned Green Man figure is considered to refer by Basford. Christmas, or Yule, is another, though there is said to be something complicated about it.⁴¹⁾ Pictures of "Occupations of Months" in a manuscript

from Canterbury (c.1280), show people involved in works connected with animal or vegetative life every month, — for example, April showing "tree planting," May, "picking flowers," or November, "knocking down acorns for swine," etc.⁴²⁾

When we think over these various ideas of the Green Man in connection with early folk customs and tales and also over such strange figures of the Green Man with different motifs found in the medieval church architecture, it would seem that medieval people more or less felt some vital force at work in effecting perpetual birth, death and resurrection of nature on the earth. At the same time we may think, in one sense, together with Timothy Husband who uses the word "Wild Man," that he is "a purely mythical creature, a literary and artistic invention of the medieval imagination."⁴³⁾ To medieval people, however, the Green Man may have seemed to embody the vital life force they felt pervading all earthly life, vegetative and animal, including animal nature of man. And as far as the Green Man figures have been given their place in the church architecture, he must have been welcome there. Medieval church building, especially the Gothic cathedral, is said to be meant to represent the whole universe as medieval people may have conceived it, a living structure with every creature having his place in some part of it. What's more, do we not feel, once inside the Gothic cathedral, as if we were under arched branches of huge, tall trees? Such an idea is beautifully explicated by Emile Mâle in his book, *The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century*. He says that medieval church is "the ark to which every creature was made welcome, and then — as if the works of God were not sufficient for them —

they invented a whole world more of terrible beings, creatures so real that they surely must have lived in the childhood of the world." He says further, the medieval cathedral is "a living thing, a gigantic tree full of birds and flowers, less like a work of man than of nature."⁴⁴⁾

Yet, who knows that the Green Man carving in Winchester Cathedral (Fig.3), with a sword and buckler in his hands, would not rise up alive from the spandrel of the choir-stalls and come out of the church as "He of the Oak," like a Hay. Doesn't the fact that the Edinburgh Gaelic MS XL has the whole text of *Fled Bricrend* suggest the possibility of the circulation of this tale somewhere until the 16th century (See note 4)? One more point to mention is about the significance of the green color in Celtic folk tradition. It is said to be "a fairy colour." The details about "green is worn by nearly all the fairy folk of Britain and Ireland," etc., are already given by Hulbert.⁴⁵⁾ A story about Highland wedding runs like this: at the marriage feast, nothing green must be served, nor green must be worn by the bride and bridegroom. Green was "Fairies' favourite colour, and they would be highly offended if wedding parties dared to wear it."⁴⁶⁾ The Green Man's world seems to be partly extended into the world of fairies, that is, of the Other World creatures.

6. Concluding Remarks

SGGK is definitely a chivalric romance, and that a courtly romance. The feast scenes, merrymakings, and other events represented in this romance let us feel as if we were watching some scenes of the contemporary aristocratic way of life.⁴⁷⁾ Sir Gawain, the hero, is a knight celebrated for his courtesy and valor. His speech and behavior in

accepting the Green Knight's challenge in the presence of King Arthur and his court is the epitome of courtesy. The Green Knight, the challenger, is also described as a stout and fair knight, despite peculiarities in his appearance. He knows how to address the king and Sir Gawain in a knightly manner though he uses some menacing and provoking words as a challenger. He is a fine aristocratic lord named Bertilak de Hautdesert in his own castle like a contemporary feudal magnate.

But when it comes to the way the story of the Beheading Game makes up the main frame of the plot dealing with Sir Gawain's adventure, it is possible to discern the pattern of the seasonal recurrence of vegetation and another aspect of the Green Knight. The source story itself which is found in the Middle Irish *Fled Bricrend* and to which this romance has some points of resemblance, might be taken to contain the recurrent pattern of death and rebirth perceived in the physical nature, if we follow Arthur Cook's interpretation according to his idea of the sympathetic relationship between man and tree with the sun-god also involved, though presented in terms of human generation change: Cuchulainn being tested by Curoi for the prospective kingship of Ireland's warriors. That Gawain is the British version of Cuchulainn might well guarantee their connection. Meanwhile, the fact that the Green Knight, characterized by the green color of vegetation, survives decapitation may be said to echo something of what Chambers has called the drama of mock death in village festivals. The scene of the return match adds to this interpretation. Here Sir Gawain goes through the terror of death when extending his neck under the Green Knight's axe, ready to face his fatal doom. When Gawain realizes he has survived

whole except for a graze on his neck, he reveals himself as a fearless, fierce man, whom the Green Knight regards as an admirable knight and judges to be as clean as if he has never sinned since he was born (l.2393-2394). As the graze was given for Gawain's slight fault in the course of the so-called "Temptation," some moral problems are involved in the Green Knight's talk in this part, but the idea of rebirth undeniably underlies this judgement. Besides, in this work we are frequently made to become aware of seasonal changes of nature. The hardship Sir Gawain experiences on his way to the Green Chapel also mainly concerns his wielding of physical force and physical perseverance to fight against some foes, beasts, monsters, above all, severe wintry weather. These matters have been already pointed out by John Speirs and others. The poetic text involved sounds like all these scenes are related to the extraordinary, mysterious being of the Green Knight, who is described, in Arthur's word, as "aenture (a wonder, or marvellous thing) (l.250)."

In this sense, the Green Knight has the aspect of a literary embodiment of some vital force of nature probably felt by medieval people in the seasonal recurrence of vegetation and at religious and seasonal festivals, or given visual forms as the Green Man in medieval church architecture. However, the important point is that *SGGK* is a romance and the Green Knight is a knight first of all. So the Green Knight may properly be called a chivalric version of the Green Man. *SGGK* is not just another version of the drama of mock death as Chambers has called it, or a retold-tale of vegetation myth, nor simply the test of the hero's valor and faith such as is found in the source story. A further investigation of the

way the Green Knight is deeply involved in the process of Sir Gawain's attainment of self-knowledge and personal growth by playing the role of the confessor⁴⁸⁾ or the moral judge will show how the poet has manipulated the basic animate conception of nature for creating such a figure of the Green Knight as is consonant with his own purpose of telling this romance. This investigation should be written at another opportunity.

Notes:

- 1) The text used is: Tolkien, J. R. R. and E. V. Gordon, ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1925; 2nd ed., rev. Norman Davis, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Oxford: Clarendon; 1967; p.b. 1968.
- 2) Cross, T. P. & C. H. Slover, *Ancient Irish Tales*, London: George G. Harrap, 1936.; "The Deeds of Cuchulainn," Barber, Richard, ed. & intro. *Myths and Legends of the British Isles*, Woodbridge: the Boydell Press, 1999. pp.258-309.
- 3) Henderson, George, ed. & tr. *Fled Bricrend, (The Feast of Bricriu)*, vol. III, Irish Text Society, London, 1899. p.xxiv; pp.203-205.; Kittredge, George L., *A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight*, Harvard UP, 1916; rpt., Mass.: Peter Smith, 1960. p.290.; Barber, R., *Myths and Legends of the British Isles*. p.258.; Cross, T. P. & C. H. Slover, *Ancient Irish Tales*. p.127.
- 4) About MSS and missing parts and differences of the story in MSS, see: Henderson, G., *Fled Bricrend*, pp. xxiv-xxxi.; Kittredge, G. L., *A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight*. p.12; pp. 290-292.; Meyer, Kuno, "The Edinburgh Gaelic Manuscript XL", *The Celtic Magazine*, 12 (1887) 208-218, which gives the Gaelic text with facing English translation of the whole story.
- 5) Texts referred to: Henderson, G., *Fled Bricrend*. pp.96-101; pp.116-129.; Kittredge, G. L., *A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight*. pp.10-19.; Cross, T. P. & C. H. Slover, *Ancient Irish Tales*. pp.272-280.; Brewer, Elizabeth, compiled, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: Sources and Analogues, (orig. From Cuchulainn to Gawain*, Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1973), Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1992. pp.18-23.; Barber, R., *Myths and Legends of the British Isles*. pp.273-275.
- 6) Kittredge, G. L., *A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight*. p.19.
- 7) Cross, T. P. & C. H. Slover, *Ancient Irish Tales*. p.254.
- 8) The main references are: Paris, Gaston, *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1888.XXX, pp.71-78. (As I was unable to get direct access to this book, I depended on Hulbert's explanation in *Modern Philology*, 13 (1915) 49-78. p.51.); Henderson, G., *Fled Bricrend*. pp.199-207.; Hulbert, G. R., "Syr Gawayn and the Grene Knygt," *Modern Philology*, 13 (1915) 49-78.; Kittredge, G. L., *A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight*; Buchanan, Alice, "The Irish Framework of Gawain and the Green Knight," *PMLA*, 47 (1932) 315-338.; Loomis, Laura Hibberd, "Gawain and the Green Knight," Loomis, Roger Sherman, ed. *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1959. pp.530-532.; Benson, Larry D., *Art and Tradition in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1965. p.11.; besides, editions of this romance, including: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. Gollancz, Sir Israel, & intros. Mabel Day & Mary S. Serjeantson, Early English Text Society, No.210, Oxford UP, 1940.; ed. Tolkien, J. R. R. and E. V. Gordon, Oxford: Clarendon, 1925.; ed. (1925) Tolkien, J. R. R. and E. V. Gordon, 2nd ed. rev. Norman Davis.; Moorman, Charles, *The Works of the Gawain-Poet*, Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1977.
- 9) See: note 8: Paris, Gaston.
- 10) Larry Benson adds one more romance in Middle High German, i.e., Collin & Wisse's *Parzifal*. But as the story included in this romance is said to be a translation of the Caradoc Story, and I didn't have an opportunity to read it, I omitted it.
- 11) For the date of composition, see: Krueger, Roberta L, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, Cambridge UP, 2000, except *La Mule sanz Frain* and *Hunbaut*, about which Kittredge is referred to.
- 12) Different forms of the Caradoc story have been found. Reference is: Kittredge, G. L., *A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight*. pp.27-32.; Brewer, Elizabeth, compiled, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: Sources and Analogues*. pp.24-32.; Arthur, Ross G., tr., *Three Arthurian Romances: Poems from Medieval France*, London: J.M. Dent (Everyman), 1996.
- 13) Brewer, Elizabeth, compiled, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: Sources and Analogues*. pp.36-41.; Nitze, William A and T. Atkinson Jenkins, ed., *Le Haut Livre du Graal, Perlesvaus*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932, vol.I.; Bryant, Nigel, tr., *The High Book of the Grail: A translation of the thirteenth-century romance of Perlesvaus*, Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1978, rpt.1996.
- 14) Brewer, Elizabeth, compiled, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: Sources and Analogues*. pp.42-58.; Kittredge, G. L., *A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight*. pp.42f.;

- Orlowsky, Boleslas, ed., *La Damoisele a la Mule (La Mule sanz Frain)*, conte en vers du cycle Arthurien par Païen de Maisières, Paris: Champion, 1911.
- 15) Hulbert, G. R., "Syr Gawayn and the Grene Knygt," *Modern Philology*, 13 (1915) pp.63-67; Kittredge, G. L., *A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight*, especially pp.251f.; Orlowsky, B., ed., *La Damoisele a la Mule*. pp.41-43.; Boll, Laurence Leo, *The Relation of Diu Crône of Heinrich von dem Türlin to La Mule sanz Frain; A Study in Sources*, orig. Wasington D.C.: The Catholic University of America, Studies in German, No. II. 1929; New York: AMS Press, 1970. See also: Thomas, J. W., tr. & into., *The Crown, A Tale of Sir Gawain and King Arthur's Court by Heinrich von dem Türlin*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989. Thomas says that the "probable source for the beheading game is *Le livre de Caradoc*." p.xxiii.
 - 16) Kittredge, G. L., *A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight*. pp.61f; Brewer, Elizabeth, compiled, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: Sources and Analogues*. pp.59-60.; Winters, Margaret, ed., *The Romance of Hunbaut: An Arthurian Poem of the Thirteenth Century*, Davis Medieval Texts and Studies, University of California, Davis, vol. IV, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984.
 - 17) See the discussion on the case of *La Mule sanz Frain* and *Diu Crône* as an example of borrowings from literature in both written and unwritten traditions: Hulbert, G. R., "Syr Gawayn and the Grene Knygt," *Modern Philology*, 13 (1915) pp.59-67.; Kittredge, G. L., *A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight*. pp.42-52; pp.251f.; Orlowsky, B., ed., *La Damoisele a la Mule*, pp.41-43.; Boll, Laurence Leo, *The Relation of Diu Crône of Heinrich von dem Türlin to La Mule sanz Frain*. pp.4f.
 - 18) For this interpretation, see: Brewer, Elizabeth, compiled, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: Sources and Analogues*. p.19.
 - 19) Chambers, E. K., *The Medieval Stage*, orig. 2 vols., Oxford UP, 1903; in 1 vol., New York: Dover Publications, 1996. pp.185-186.
 - 20) Speirs, John, "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," *Scrutiny*, 16 (1949) 274-300. p.277.
 - 21) Chambers, E. K., *The Medieval Stage*, pp.183-187.
 - 22) *ibid.* p.175.
 - 23) Skeat, Walter W., *The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman in Three Parallel Texts together with Richard the Redeless by William Langland*, 2 vols., Oxford UP, 1886; rpt. with additional bibliography, London: Low & Brydone, 1965. vol.1, p.166. This is usually considered the earliest mention of Robin Hood. But Skeat further gives the note that "Mr. Wright thinks that one of the extant Robin-Hood ballads is really of the date of Edward II" (1284-1327, King 1307-). vol.2, p.94.
 - 24) Uéno, Yoshiko, *The Robin Hood Legend* (in Japanese), Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1988. pp.114-115.
 - 25) Frazer, Sir James George, *The Golden Bough: a study in magic and religion*, 3rd. ed., 11 vols., London: Macmillan, 1936. vol.2, p.82.
 - 26) *ibid.* pp.73-74; p.79.
 - 27) Cook, Arthur Bernard, "The European Sky-God IV The Celts," *Folk-lore*, 17 (1906) 27-71. pp.30-32; pp.52-53.
 - 28) Cook, A. B., "The European Sky-God VI The Celts," *Folk-lore*, 17 (1906) 308-346. For *Virbius*, especially see: pp.334-341.; also, "The European Sky-God III The Italians," *Folk-lore*, 16 (1905). pp.290-291 note 9.
 - 29) Cave, C. J. P., *Roof Bosses in Medieval Churches: An Aspect of Gothic Sculpture*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1948.; Anderson, M. D., *Misericords: Medieval Life in English Woodcarving*, A King Penguin Book, 1954.; Basford, Kathleen, *The Green Man*, Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1978; p.b. 1998.
 - 30) Lady Raglan, "The Green Man in church Architecture," *Folk-Lore*, 50 (1939) 45-57. I did not have direct access to Lady Raglan's article, but got this information from: Hutton, Ronald, *The Stations of the Sun, A History of the Ritual Year in Britain*, Oxford UP, 1996; p.b. 2001. pp.241-243.
 - 31) Basford, Kathleen, *The Green Man*. Quotations, pp.12-13.
 - 32) Hutton, R., *The Stations of the Sun*. For summary comments, especially, pp.241-243; pp.422-426.
 - 33) Uéno, Yoshiko, *The Robin Hood Legend*. p.113.
 - 34) "COLLECTANEA, Tree Worship in China" (in a letter from the Rev. J. Hinds to A. R. Wright), *Folk-lore*, 17 (1906) 190.
 - 35) Wright, Thomas, *Essays on Subjects connected with Literature, popular Superstitions, and History*, 2 vols., London: John Russell Smith, 1846. vol.1 pp.246-247.
 - 36) Cook, A. B., "European Sky-God VI The Celts," *Folk-lore*, 17 (1906). pp.316-324; "The European Sky-God IV The Celts," *Folk-lore*, 17(1906). p.67.
 - 37) Basford, Kathleen, *The Green Man*. Quotations: p.19.; p.18.
 - 38) Hutton, R., *The Stations of the Sun*. p.226. Robert Grosseteste (c.1175-1253), Bishop of Lincoln (1235-), is said to have "complained to his archdeacons of priests who demeaned themselves by joining 'games which they call the bringing-in of May'."
 - 39) *The English Works of John Gower*, ed., Macauley, G. G., Early English Text Society, E.S. NO.81, Oxford UP, 1900; rpt. 1969, 2 vols. vol. 1, "The Trump of Death," Book 1, 2021-2274.
 - 40) *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry (Musée Condé, Chantilly)*, Introduction and Legends by Longmon, Jean and Raymond Cazelles, London: Thames and Hudson, 1969. F.

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- 41) Hutton, R., *The Stations of the Sun*. pp.1-8.
- 42) Morgan, Kenneth O., *The Oxford Illustrated History of Britain*, Oxford UP, 1984; reissued 1997. Facing page 161.
- 43) Husband, Timothy, *The Wild Man, Myth and Symbolism*, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980. p.1.
- 44) Mâle, Emile, *The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century*, tr.Dora Nussey, New York: Harper & Row, 1958. p.28; p.396.
- 45) Hulbert, G. R., "Syr Gawayn and the Grene Knygt," *Modern Philology*, 13 (1915). pp.71-73.
- 46) "A Highland Wedding in Bygone Days," *The Celtic Magazine*, 13 (1888), 509-511.
- 47) Matsui, Noriko, "Sir Gawwain and the Green Knight and Feasts in Late Medieval England (in Japanese)," *Rikkyo University Bulletin of Studies in Tourism*, 4 (2002), 78-84.
- 48) Oiji, Takeo, writes that we can see a pattern of penance in the scene of the return match at the Green Chapel. Oiji, Takeo, "Catholicism in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Studies in English Literature*, 51 (1974), 5-21.

Figures:

These figures were taken from: Basford, Kathleen, *The Green Man*, Cambridge: D.S.Brewer, p.b. 1998. I wish to express my gratitude to the author and the publisher.



Fig.1 SOUTHWELL, Hawthorn mask.



Fig.2 SUTTON BENDER, Wiltshire, ALL SAINTS.
Green Man with hawthorn and birds.
? early 14th century



Fig.3 WINCHESTER, Hampshire, CATHEDRAL.
Spandrel in choir stalls, early 14th century